



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
AND
SCOPING MEETING NOTIFICATION**



Bruce W. McClendon FAICP
Director of Planning

DATE: February 9, 2007

PROJECT TITLE: Tesoro del Valle Phases B and C
SCH No. 93021007
Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 51644
General Plan Amendment
Zone Change
Conditional Use Permit No. 92-074 for Grading, Hillside
Management, and a Density Controlled Development
Oak Tree Permit No. 92-074

CEQA LEAD AGENCY: County of Los Angeles
Department of Regional Planning
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1348
Los Angeles, CA 90012

PROJECT APPLICANT: Montalvo Properties & J. Evans & T. Collins
3600 Birch St., Suite 220
Newport Beach, CA 92660

The County of Los Angeles is the Lead Agency and will prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project described below. In compliance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the County of Los Angeles is sending this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to responsible agencies, interested parties and federal agencies which may be involved in approving or permitting the project, and to trustee agencies responsible for natural resources affected by the project. Within 30 days after receiving the NOP, each agency is requested to provide the County of Los Angeles with specific details about the scope and content of the environmental information to be contained in the EIR related to that agency's area of statutory responsibility. The purpose of this NOP is to solicit the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

PROJECT LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The proposed project is located in the Santa Clarita Valley in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The project site is north and west of Phase A of the Tesoro del Valle development, just northerly of Avenida Rancho Tesoro and westerly of Casa Luna Place. The site is surrounded to the north and west by undeveloped open space. Natural open space and San Francisquito Canyon are located to the east of the project site. Southwest and southeast of the project is the Valencia Master Planned Communities of West Creek and North Park. The nearest highways are Interstate 5 and State Route 126, located approximately four miles to the southwest of the project site. Thoroughfares that provide regional access to the site via San Francisquito

Canyon Road include McBean Parkway, Copper Hill Drive and Seco Canyon Road. The regional and local vicinity are depicted in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

This project site is currently vacant with predominantly undeveloped open space, with the exception of dirt roads and fire breaks that transverse the site. The site is situated between San Francisquito Canyon which is located along the eastern end of the tract, and Wayside Canyon located along the western end of the tract, with Tapia Canyon located further west. Topography on the site consists of steep to moderately steep terrain, which levels off to the east down to the broad alluvial bottom of the San Francisquito Creek. A large majority of the site is vegetated with chamise chaparral and sage scrub. SEA area No. 19 is located partially through the eastern edge of Phase C within San Francisquito Creek. This SEA is primarily for preservation of a movement corridor for upstream and downstream populations of the unarmored threespine stickleback in the Santa Clara River. Other sensitive animal species that may occur on the project site include Swainson's hawk, San Diego coast horned lizard, costal western whiptail, loggerhead shrike, and Bell's sage sparrow along with many other species. Natural water courses on site consist of natural drainage courses which provide drainage for surface water runoff to San Francisquito Creek to the east through canyons below the ridges that transect the site. Drainage to the west includes the upper portions of Wayside Canyon and its tributaries.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Approved 1999 Final EIR

In 1995, the Tesoro del Valle Project EIR was made available for public review. The project included a 1,795-acre mixed-use community comprised of approximately 3,000 residential dwelling units, 5.6 acres of commercial, and supporting infrastructure and public services, including schools, parks, and a fire station site. Prior to approval of the Tesoro del Valle development by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors on May 18, 1999, the project underwent several design modifications.

Ultimately, the approved Tesoro del Valle project included 1,791 dwelling units (including 898 single-family lots and 893 residential condominium units), approximately 6.2 acres of commercial use (40,000 square feet), 61.8 acres of active parks, a 13.9-acre Recreation Center, an elementary school site, Tesoro Historical site (Harry Cary Ranch), and riding/hiking/equestrian trails throughout the 1,795-acre site. Additional design features include a fire station site, a sewer lift station, water quality/retention basins, water tank sites, equestrian rest areas, and open space lots. Approximately 621.5 acres (35 percent) of the site was designed as undeveloped natural open space. The area referenced as SEA No. 19 is in the process of being dedicated to the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy.

The project required General Plan Amendment 92-074-(5), Zone Change Case No. 92-074-(5), Conditional Use Permit No. 92-074-(5), Oak Tree Permit No. 92-074-(5), and Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 51644. The project was designed to be constructed in four phases, which coincide with four planning areas: A, B, C, and D. The 1998 Tesoro del Valle project proposed a total of 1,791 residential units to be divided between the planning areas as follows:

- Planning Area A (443.4 acres) – 1,552 units (659 single-family and 893 multi-family)
- Planning Area B (595.5 acres) – 122 single-family units
- Planning Area C (668.7 acres) – 115 single-family units
- Planning Area D (87.4 acres) – 2 single-family units (estate lots)

The Final Environmental Impact Report for the project consists of the Draft EIR dated October 1995, the Technical Appendices to the DEIR dated October 1995, the Final EIR dated December 1996, and the Additional Environmental Information for Inclusion in the Final EIR for

Revised Tesoro del Valle Project dated October 1998. The Final EIR determined that the adverse effects upon direct and cumulative impacts to air quality, biota, traffic/access, the aesthetic/visual character of the project site, and the potential impact on police services would remain significant after mitigation. The Board of Supervisors approved the Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations prepared for the project.

The approved project has the following jurisdictional permits in place: US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). After approval of the County Board of Supervisors in 1999, Planning Area A had a unit build out of 1,077 which is less than the 1,552 unit approval.

Proposed 2006 Tract Map Revision

The proposed revision to the Final 1998 EIR for Vesting Tentative Tract Map (VTTM 51644) includes only the designated areas for Phases B and C. Phase A (currently built-out) and Area D are not a part of this revised tract map. The previously approved unit count for the Tesoro del Valle project for Phase A was 1,552 units. However, when the designs for Phase A were completed, the final unit count was 1,077, resulting in a balance of 475 lots that were approved for development but were not constructed. These remaining 475 lots have been incorporated into the total planned units for Phases B and C. Total build out for Phases B and C will include a total of 714 residential lots, which includes the originally approved 122 units for Phase B, 115 units approved for Phase C, the remaining balance of 475 lots from Phase A, and two lots from Phase D.

Although no more than the original 1,791 units approved with this tract are still proposed with the redesign and relocation of the total 477 units, the project will require a General Plan Amendment to the Los Angeles County and Santa Clarita Valley Area Plans as well as a zone change. The Santa Clarita Valley Areawide Plan Urban 1 designation (1.1 to 3.3 units/acre) and the RPD-7,000-3.3U (Residential Planned Development- 7,000 square foot minimum lot size, 3.3 units to the acre) zone change would be required to allow for the higher density increase proposed in Phases B and C. The required discretionary approvals for the proposed project are:

General Plan Amendment-	From Hillside Management (HM) to Urban-1 (U1)
	From Non-Urban (N1) to Urban-1 (U1)
Zone Change-	From A-2-2 (Heavy Agricultural) to RPD 7000-3.3U
Conditional Use Permit-	For Grading, Hillside Management, and a Density Controlled Development

Grading Footprint

Approximately 11 million cubic yards of grading is proposed. All cut and fill materials would be balanced onsite; therefore, grading would not require any off-site hauling of fill material. No importation of fill is proposed.

Residential Lots

The minimum residential lot size on the site is 7,000 sq feet and the average lot size is 25,455 sq. ft., with an overall project density of 0.56 dwelling units per acre. Phase B would be called "The Canyon Estates" and would include 182 estate residential lots. The Canyon Estates would include larger lots, with a significant portion of each lot remaining as ungraded land. The average lot size within Phase B is approximately 46,000 square feet. Phase C would be called

“The Mesas Village”, which would include 532 residential lots in a variety of sizes. The proposed Phases B and C tract map designs will be substantially within the same graded footprint that was proposed and approved in 1999 by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, although the density will be greater than originally approved in 1999. Therefore, development within Phases B and C involves moving the lots between the different Phases while being substantially contained within the original footprint of development and not requiring additional areas of grading.

Open Space Lots

The proposed project includes 71 Open Space/Debris Basin/Water Tank lots (Lots 715-742; 744-771; and 773-790). Lots 771 will contain two water reservoir tanks to provide potable water to the project site, as well as adjacent properties. Natural, undisturbed open space on the project site includes 625.7 acres, or 49.5% of the project site. Other areas of open space areas would include areas subject to fuel modification and internal passive green spaces and manufactured slopes.

Recreation Amenities

The proposed project will contain various recreational amenities and passive open spaces. Lots 733, 767, 778, and 780 are planned to contain recreation centers. The facilities may include a pool, tennis courts, basketball courts, and other active recreation facilities. An equestrian trail will be constructed along the outer edge of the project's grading footprint and will connect to existing trails onsite. Lot 768 is planned to contain a trailhead to connect the developed project site to the existing equestrian trails on the property. Lot 779 in Phase C is a large passive open space area located along the centerline of the development. This lot is planned to contain a lake that will cross under “D” Street through a culvert and into Lot 777.

Site Access and Circulation

Access to the project site would be through Phase A of the Tesoro del Valle development, which has been completed. Both Avenida Rancho Tesoro and Tesoro del Valle Drive, which serve as the access points into Phase A, connect to Copper Hill Drive. Copper Hill Drive provides access to the City of Santa Clarita and ultimately to Interstate-5.

Avenida Rancho Tesoro continues from Phase A through to Phases B and C and is called “A Street” once it transitions out of Phase A. Portions of A Street adjacent to Lots 826-833 and 835-837 would also have an additional 12 feet of ROW for continuation of the existing equestrian trail. Casa Luna Place is accessed from Tesoro del Valle Drive and would also provide access to Phase B. Autoturns (“roundabouts”) and cul-de-sacs will be located throughout Phase C. All internal roadways will conform to County local street standards, with various ROW widths.

Regional Fire Protection

Lot 743 in Phase B is planned to contain a new fire station. A fuel modification plan is required to increase the defensible space around habitable structures because the project site is located within a “Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone” (VHFHSZ), or Fire Zone Four. The fuel modification requirements include a 200-foot buffer zone, consisting of a combination of a 20-foot wet zone (Zone A - landscaped and irrigated), a 30-foot irrigated zone with more native plants (Zone B), and a 150-foot thinning zone (Zone C) over most of the developed portion of the project site. The thinning zone would include the removal of brush and dead plant materials, removal of non-native tree species, and periodic grass and weed cutting. The fuel modification plan will be submitted to the Los Angeles County Fire Department Forestry Division and would need to be approved prior to any construction activities.

Utilities

All drainage facilities would be constructed according to Los Angeles County Department of Public Works standards and requirements. The project site does, with the exception of the four water tanks and related equipment in Area B, not contain any existing potable water or sewer infrastructure, although service is accessible through pipelines within Phase A, which are stubbed to the project. The Newhall County Water District (NCWD), one of four retail water purveyors within Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA), would provide potable water to the project. Due to the elevations of the graded pads, two new reservoir tanks would be constructed on the project site within Lot 771 located in the northwestern portion of Phase B, and one new site with two tanks would be located within Phase C. These tanks would provide potable water and would be adequate for all water supply and fire suppression needs on the site. The project site does not contain any existing sewage infrastructure. Development of the proposed project site would require the construction of sewer pipelines from the existing lines within Phase A and stubbed to the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO BE ANALYZED IN EIR

The County of Los Angeles has prepared an Initial Study (IS) and determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required for the proposed project. The IS summarizes the environmental issues that must be analyzed in the EIR and it is attached for review. A summary of the probable environmental effects of the project is presented in Table 2 below.

**TABLE 2
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS OVERVIEW**

Checklist Issue	Potential Significant Impacts/Issues for Analysis
HAZARDS	
Geotechnical	Landslide and liquefaction hazards
Flood	Project site contains a 100-year floodplain; increased erosion and mudflow potential
Fire	Project site within (Fire Zone 4)
Noise	Construction (grading).
RESOURCES	
Water Quality	Construction (grading) can affect surface water quality to San Francisquito Creek and Santa Clara River
Air Quality	Construction and traffic from development would increase air pollutant emissions
Biota	Biological resources impacts
Cultural	Potential archaeological sensitivity
Mineral	Possible mineral resources
Agricultural	No impact
Visual	Disturbance of ridgeline view
SERVICES	
Traffic/Access	Construction and operational impacts
Sewer	Project site not currently served by sewer infrastructure but stubbed to the site.
Education	No impact. The School Mitigation Agreements are in place.
Fire/Sheriff	Existing police protection services are not adequate
Utility/Other	Landfill capacity, water supply
OTHER ISSUES	
General	No impact
Environmental Safety	No impact
Land Use	Project area density
Population/Recreation	No impact

Checklist Issue	Potential Significant Impacts/Issues for Analysis
Mandatory Findings	Project has the potential to significantly affect traffic, biota, and water quality

SCOPING MEETING

To assist in local participation in the EIR process, a Scoping Meeting will be held to present the proposed project and to solicit suggestions from the public and responsible agencies on the content of the Draft Supplemental EIR. This meeting will be held in the Tesoro Historical Site located within Phase A of the Tesoro del Valle development at 28515 Avenida Rancho Tesoro, Newhall, CA on Wednesday February 21, 2007 from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION REVIEW AND COMMENTS

The 30-day review period for the Notice of Preparation will be from February 12, 2007 to March 13, 2007. Copies of the NOP are available for review at Canyon Country County Library, 18601 Soledad Canyon Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91351; Valencia County Library at 23743 West Valencia Boulevard, Santa Clarita, CA 91355; Newhall County Library at 22704 West 9th Street, Santa Clarita, CA 91321, and the Department of Regional Planning at the address below. The Department of Regional Planning website <http://planning.lacounty.gov> will also have the NOP materials under the "Case and Hearing Info" for Tract Map No. 51644." The County of Los Angeles is soliciting input based on your views and opinions concerning the scope of the EIR for the proposed project. To facilitate your review, the following materials are attached:

- Los Angeles County Initial Study
- Regional Location Map
- Local Vicinity Map
- 500-foot Radius Land Use Map
- Project Exhibit

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than March 13, 2007. In your written response, please include the name of a contact person in your agency. Please direct all written comments to the following address:

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